

For immediate release

Monday, May 13, 2019

Contacts:

Chief Stephen P. Gammill , Genoa Township Police, 614-568-2060

Chief Gary Honeycutt, Genoa Township Fire, 614-568-2040

Communications Director, Leslie Strader, 614-795-3885

Death Investigation Update

The following is an update to the investigation initiated on Thursday, May 2, 2019 after Genoa Township Police responded to 6931 Lewis Center Road at approximately 1:19 PM and discovered four members of the Reitter family deceased inside:

- Carbon monoxide levels exceeding 999ppm were first vented from the home in order for Genoa Township Police and Fire Departments to safely search the property. During secondary testing readings were as high as 1200 ppm.
- The four family members were located in separate rooms, either in bed or in bathrooms. The three family dogs were also deceased with two of them in crates.
- No carbon monoxide detectors were found in the home.
- The last known contact with the family was the evening of Monday, April 29, 2019 and they had all complained of illness. The schools were notified by the parents that their daughter would not be attending school on Tuesday, April 30, 2019 due to illness. The schools are believed to have followed all appropriate protocols.
- During a preliminary inspection of appliances, police and fire personnel observed the exhaust pipe on top of the hot water heater was slightly dislodged. A Delaware County code compliance inspector examined the water heater on May 2 and reported it did appear to be code compliant, but no permit was on file for the installation as required by Ohio Residential Code 2013, Section 105.1.
- On May 3 Genoa Township Police Department had the hot water heater and furnace examined by a forensic engineering company. When an operational trial was initiated the water heater immediately began emitting high levels of carbon monoxide. Testing had to be stopped before it was possible to conclude if the cause of carbon monoxide was faulty installation or a faulty unit; that determination will require more extensive testing. The furnace was found to be in good working order.
- There is no evidence indicating the hot water heater had been tampered with by any person(s).
- The water heater is a Navien NPE-240A tankless system and it was installed by Mr. Reitter and a friend on December 15, 2018 according to the records. This water heater requires conversion from natural gas to propane.
- On December 20, 2018 the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a recall for about 3400 Navien tankless water heaters with several different models because a "kit installed on the tankless water heaters and boilers to convert them from natural gas to propane can cause the unit to

produce excessive amounts of carbon monoxide, posing a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning to consumers." This recall is available on the CPSC website.

- The Navien model NPE-240A in the Reitter home is not on the list of recalled products.
- The Genoa Township Fire Department learned that on May 5, 2019, the Fort Morrow Fire District in Marion County, Ohio responded to a similar incident in which an individual survived after being exposed to carbon monoxide in their home. The source of carbon monoxide in the Marion County incident was a Navien NCB-240E tankless water heater that had been converted from natural gas to propane. It was installed in September 2018.
- Genoa Township Police and Fire Departments reviewed photographs of the hot water heater in the Marion County incident and noted the exhaust pipe was dislodged in what seems to be the same location and manner as the unit in the Reitter home.
- Genoa Township Police contacted the Ohio Attorney General's consumer product safety section and, with their assistance, reported the two similar incidents to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on May 10. The findings of the Genoa Township investigation are being provided to assist in determining what, if any, investigation will be conducted.
- The Montgomery County Coroner, who performed autopsies on the Reitter family, has issued a preliminary report listing the cause of death as carbon monoxide saturation. After the blood gasses are analyzed, which will take several weeks, the cause of death may be changed to carbon monoxide intoxication. There were no other signs of trauma or any other cause of death indicated.
- Genoa Township Police briefed the family of the deceased and their lawyers on May 9th on the status of the investigation. It was stressed that Genoa Township Police cannot say whether the cause of the carbon monoxide was due to faulty installation or a product defect. Further testing would be required to make that determination at the discretion of the executor(s) of the estate and/or the Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- The scope of the Genoa Township Police Department's investigation is only to determine if there was foul play or a crime committed that resulted in the deaths of these individuals. Since determining that is not the case, Genoa Township Police Department will close the investigation once the final autopsy report is received.
- The Genoa Township Police Department makes no allegations or assertions that the cause of the carbon monoxide was due to human or product error; that remains undetermined.

Genoa Township Police Department thanks the Genoa Township Fire Department, Delaware County Sheriff's Office, and Ohio Attorney General's Office for their assistance in this investigation. Continued support will be provided to the family of the deceased.